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ABSTRACT

This article explains principles of cooperative teaching using the analogy of a "team effort" to include special needs students within the general education classroom. Columns contrast "what it isn't" and "what it is" for the following aspects of cooperative teaching: (1) establishing the ground rules (e.g., it's not a fad but is an evolution); (2) planning and scheduling (e.g., it's not having unplanned visits but is scheduling visits); (3) teaching in the same environment (e.g., it's not being responsible only for my kids but is recognizing joint responsibility for all the kids); and (4) sustaining the relationship over time (e.g., it's not thinking that students are the only learners but is realizing that the adults are learning as well). (DB)

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Cooperative Teaching:

What It Isn't and What It Is

Call it what you may: Cooperative Teaching, Collaborative Teaching and/or Co-Teaching - it may even be coined the professional "sporting event" of the century! Cooperative Teaching is one of several collaborative structures in which two educators are simultaneously present in the same classroom teaching a heterogeneous mix of students. Currently, for many educators, it is a new and often unfamiliar style of interaction. But, as class composition becomes more diverse, it is predicted many educators will become more interested in finding out how to become members of this Cooperative Teaching team and thus it will be used much more frequently. This brief article will use the analogy of a "team effort" where educational professionals - who have diverse, but complementary sets of skills - "suit up" in an attempt to more effectively include students within the general education classroom.

Looking Over the Prospects

Since completing my doctoral dissertation on "Retraining Teachers to Work Cooperatively (in the early 1980s), I have had the good fortune of going on the road and "playing" at major educational events - helping interested "fans" learn how to implement Cooperative Teaching as they simultaneously struggle toward responsible inclusion of students into general education classes (i.e., either maintaining students more effectively, reintegrating those who have been removed for major portions of their school day and/or integrating others for the first time in their educational career).

Sadly enough the entire "squad" has often not been in attendance at the pre game session to hear the nitty-gritty of the "game plan." As a result, many unnecessary losses have occurred because of this critical oversight. The administrator, general and special educators and other support services providers

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such as the G & T facilitator, Chapter 1/Title One, speech and language pathologists, bilingual educators, psychologists, counselors and so forth must all be hearing the same "chalk talk" simultaneously.

In recent months however, as more players are "gearing up " for this type of collaborative relationship, leagues are forming and more information about the game is appearing in sporting journals. What is now known for certain is that there are numerous critical components which make for a effective cooperative teaching "team."

This article will walk you through a set of "plays" for a successful "teaming effort" preserving the integrity of Cooperative Teaching while simultaneously striving to simplify its presentation to fit the space constraints. Comparative charts will be employed while continuing throughout to use the analogy of the "team" and framing the contents around two major elements: **What It Isn't**, in the left column, to the **What It Is**, in the right. Continuing with the analogy, four subcomponents of a successful "team" using Cooperative Teaching will be described: **Drafting the Players** - (i.e.,establishing the ground rules); **Previewing the Season**- (i.e., planning and scheduling); **Giving It Your All** - (i.e., teaching together) **Struggling Through the Tough Times** - (i.e., sustaining the relationship over time).

These items have been obtained from both elementary & secondary educators in thousands of schools in both urban, suburban and rural school districts throughout the country.

"Drafting the Players"

(i.e., the ground rules)

Quite frankly, understanding this component is perhaps the most important element of a successful Cooperative Teaching relationship in terms of starting off on the right foot.

What It Isn't	What It Is
-thinking it is a fad	-knowing it is an evolution
-mandating its implementation	-encouraging volunteers
-looking for a road map	-knowing it is a journey
-searching for the "right" style match	-realizing styles can blend & merge
-thinking its only for labeled students	-recognizing it is for all students
-feeling the need for more staff	-using all staff more effective
-thinking it is only for special educators	-recognizing that all support providers must be involved
-thinking it will cost more	-realizing it is more cost effective
-believing it must be an "equal" effort	-recognizing it is a "shared" effort
-thinking it can be done without any or with one- shot staff development	-recognizing it requires long-term, on-going staff development
-having the staff development content merely focus on the "concept"	-weaving in numerous relation-relationship skills
-using exclusive language (i.e., me, my, mine)	-using inclusive language (i.e., we, us, our)
-thinking its purpose is to reduce staff reduce staff	-recognizing it is to use staff more effectively

If these ground rules are understood by both parties BEFORE entering into this the game, then the chances of winning are much better.

"Previewing the Season"

(i.e., scheduling and planning)

What It Isn't	What It Is
-thinking it is forever with the same person	-realizing that when students needs are being met, you move to a different collaborative structure

-having unplanned or drop in visits	-scheduling in your visits
-thinking it is all day, every day	-aligning blocks of time based on student needs
-building tight schedules which are difficult to maintain	-building flexible and fluid schedules
-using an unstructured planning format and procedure	-using a systematic form for planning and a questioning/thinking procedure
-thinking it takes significant time for planning	-realizing you must plan as you go
-thinking you plan and teach, plan and teach	-recognizing you plan, teach, and process, plan, teach, and process
-thinking your focus is exclusively on kids	-recognizing you must work on the adults relationship as well
-trying to use the same materials and methods for all students	-using numerous materials and multiple pathways to reach all students
-thinking we must be on page 30 by ...	-realizing you focus on a few critical concepts
-thinking there is one rate & one pace	-using varied rates and pacing

If these scheduling and planning elements are discussed prior to actually teaching cooperatively then the probability is extremely high that you will have a VICTORY!

"Giving It Your All"

(i.e., teaching in the same environment)

<u>What It Isn't</u>	<u>What It Is</u>
-expecting perfection	-remembering that this is an evolving

	relationship and problems should be our friends
-building off the weaknesses of the	-building on the strengths of each partner
-thinking its a "lead -follow" format for teaching	-recognizing its a "lead & enhance" format for teaching
-thinking it's a "you teach than I'll teach approach	-remembering its a teaching dialogue among the two people
-thinking I'm responsible for my kids, you yours	-recognizing we're both responsible for all kids
-feeling like an aide	-discussing roles of each individual
-hovering over "my" kids	-giving kids roots and wings
-thinking that one teaches, the other always grazes	-recognizes one leads, the other anticipates what's needed and vise versa
-teaching students only facts	-remembering to teach students "how to" skills (thinking, acting, surviving)
-teaching and learning passively	-teaching and learning very actively

If you frequently review these elements then you're likely to develop and implement a cooperative teaching relationship which capitalizes on the "mindware" each adult has.

"Struggling through the Tough Ones"

(i.e., sustaining the relationship over time).

<u>What It Isn't</u>	<u>What It Is</u>
-having a "well but" attitude	-having a "how might, how can" attitude
-having low expectations for the process and the outcome	-having high expectations for what you will do and how it will work

-thinking that students are the only learners	-realizing adults are learning as well
-wondering about the effectiveness	-collecting data and disseminating to others about the effectiveness
-using limiting words such as can't, won't and don't (reactive)	-using freeing words such as can, will, do (proactive)
-having a settlers mentality	-having the pioneering spirit
-keeping things to yourself	-sharing what you are learning with others

If you adhere to these elements, then you are sure to have a "championship season" in your cooperative teaching relationship.

The Celebration

Cooperative Teaching relies on several elements: establishing a solid foundation for working together, systematic planning, active teaching, and ongoing processing of your professional relationship. This collaborative structure has the potential of significantly altering the lives of both the adults and students in the school. If these "plays", which have been discussed above, are followed, the possibility of a "winning game" is quite certain. Go Team!

Bauwens, J. & Hourcade, J. J. (1995). Cooperative Teaching: Rebuilding the Schoolhouse for All Students. Austin: Pro Ed.

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